Schoolscapes

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Addressing a Few Misconceptions about the Québec Education Reform

RICHARD BASTIEN, DIRECTOR, [illegible]

As new programs begin to be implemented this year in kindergarten and Cycle One elementary classrooms throughout Québec, parents, teachers, administrators and the public in general are beginning to analyze the impact of the Education Reform on basic teaching and learning principles and practices. In considering certain issues being raised in this Reform, such as student autonomy and cycle-based learning, some people are expressing concern that "tried and true" classroom practices are being ushered out. Is this really so, or does this view originate from certain misconceptions about this Reform?

Consider the matter of the organization of learning into cycles rather than separate consecutive grades. The Education Program proposes that student learning be measured over a two-year time span, focusing on the development of specific competencies for each learning cycle. Organizationally, some people assume that students in each cycle should remain with the same teacher for two years. This particular way of grouping students, called "looping," happens to be one of the ways schools can organize students into classrooms. Another organizational model consists in regrouping students into multi-level classrooms, allowing students of different ages and skill levels to learn together and benefit from the expertise and care of a team of teachers.

The concept of cycles not only expands learning time but also allows for new ways of organizing time. Schools and their communities are encouraged to determine for themselves the most appropriate methods of organizing services for their students, according to their own needs and resources. The fact that students have two years to progress toward the development of competencies should not restrict schools in their choices of classroom organization or their approaches to differentiating instruction.

Another misconception requiring reexamination concerns the matter of student involvement and autonomy. Proposing that students take on a more active role in their learning would appear to some to put an end to traditional teaching methods. Asking teachers to focus their attention primarily on the behavioural components of learning would seem, for some, to suggest that teachers stop instructing and guiding their students, leaving students to fend for themselves. Many have voiced concerns that this Reform is proposing to "throw out the baby with the bath water." The suggestion that teachers should now hand over every aspect of planning and evaluation of learning to their students and react only to their students' day-to-day needs and interests does not reflect the organizational complexity of teaching, nor the important interaction between teachers and their students observed in dynamic and productive classrooms.

Effective and conscientious teachers have always struck a fine balance between considering the immediate needs and interests of their students and the longer-term learning goals established in ministry programs. When the time is right, a teacher knows how to draw on the interests of students to impart specific information and assist them in developing the basic skills they must acquire to carry out more complex learning tasks or projects. Whether explicit teaching occurs before, during or after particular assignments, a key objective is maintaining that interaction between teaching and learning. When students do well, some say that it is either because of good teaching or because they learned well. Why should it not, ultimately, be because of both? Both actions should, after all, be seen as part of a larger learning process.

Good teaching continues to be grounded in knowing when students need to be instructed or guided in specific areas and when they can strike out on their own to learn more independently. Nothing in Québec's Education Reform suggests that students learn all the basic skills and abilities completely on their own. In fact, as we begin to implement the new curriculum, teachers will be urged to work even more closely with their students, to provide them with an educational environment that responds to and nurtures individual learning styles, achievement and motivation.

Mission Accomplished

PASCALE SAUVÉ

On May 17 and 18, 2000, members of the program development committees for elementary levels met in Québec City for a meeting which, for most of them, was the final phase in a work process that had lasted over 18 months.

The mood was festive during the two-day meeting. Camaraderie had developed among the members who, working in teams, had closely scrutinized elementary-level programs during the past months. They were all visibly happy to be together again, for a final meeting.

Each program development committee consisted of about twenty people from different regions of Québec. These men and women from the field—teachers, educational consultants, etc.—had been given the mission to assess the coherence and "doability" of the preparatory work that constituted the preliminary versions of the programs of study. Based on their practical experience and on information gathered through research that had, no doubt, increased their knowledge base, they examined, analyzed, designed, corrected, and validated the contents and wording of the programs for elementary levels. These programs were introduced in schools in September.

Participants at the meeting were able to observe the fruit of their labour as the results were presented in workshops. From their comments and reactions during the presentations, it was obvious that they were proud of the results of their work. They are convinced that the new program of study will be beneficial to students and the entire teaching staff, and certain that it will bring more laughter and smiles to classrooms!

Participants went home at the end of the two days with a twinge of sorrow, promising to meet again soon. They all hope that their contribution to the programs of study is only the beginning of an exchange and cooperation network that spans the entire Québec province.

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Personal Accounts

by Members of the Program Development Committees for Elementary Levels

A. presented by CLAUDINE ST-GERMAIN

Science and Technology A Successful Match

Geneviève Dion
Special Education Coordinator
Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries

(CSG) This program development committee was faced with the difficult task of meshing the scientific and technological cultures together. Today, the committee members are proud of the innovative program they drafted.

"The challenge, at first, was to understand the philosophy behind the new approach. Competencies, capacities—these aren't easy concepts. It's difficult enough to define exactly what knowledge means. But competencies are basic to this new approach so we worked very hard to arrive at a common understanding.

"The next step was to determine what students needed to master by the end of each cycle and to provide teachers with examples of activities that would promote the integration of learning. Then, we made connections to see if our program effectively covered all of the competencies.

"We also had to keep abreast of what the other committees were doing to avoid any unnecessary repetition from one program to another. For example, developing scientific vocabulary is part of our program, but we had to find out whether and how that angle was covered in the mathematics and language arts programs.

"I'm very pleased with the overall result and with our program in particular. It's solid. And so many people worked on it!"

English as a Second Language Great Team Spirit

Sandra Gagnon
ESL Teacher
Commission scolaire de l'Estuaire

(CSG) During the workshops, it was quite clear that the members of this program development committee really enjoyed working together. For Sandra Gagnon, who has been teaching English as a second language for six years, being on the committee proved a valuable experience.

"The chemistry within the group was extraordinary. The meetings were unique, and everyone participated.

"We started by determining which competencies should be included in the program. Then we divided into sub-committees to analyze the competencies one by one. We each gave our opinion on the changes that were needed. At the next meeting, we received comments about our work. Our team also looked at the problems teachers were likely to experience. We did this by sharing our concerns and looking for solutions together.

"It was particularly satisfying to be involved in a process of change where we were learning and developing new ways of thinking. I am very proud to have had a part in such a huge undertaking."

Social Sciences A New Way of Looking at the Social Sciences

(CSG) Combining geography, history and citizenship education into one program is quite a challenge. But according to Chantal Poirier and Cylvie Gaignard, when you love teaching and you're working for the good of your students, no challenge is too great!

Cylvie Gaignard
Teacher
Commission scolaire de Rouyn-Noranda

"I had criticized an end-of-year social sciences evaluation instrument intended for Grade 4 students because I thought that its content just wasn't meaningful to 9-year-old children. Later, the school board asked me to sit on the social sciences program development committee, to my surprise. The school board said that, with my critical mind, I was exactly the type of person needed, so I accepted.

"The committee coordinators would have us read drafts of the program, and we would make comments and suggestions. We assessed whether what was proposed in the program was doable in class. There were times when we called things into question or were confused, but we were never afraid. We were working for our students, out of our love for teaching.

"If it is well implemented, the Reform will be like a breath of fresh air. But we will have to change, to question our preconceived ideas."

Chantal Poirier
Teacher
Commission scolaire des Draveurs

"I had sat on an examination committee. When I found out they were looking for teachers to sit on the social sciences committee, I volunteered."

"The new social sciences program will be a more tightly bound package: when studying a given society, the class will look at it from both an historical and a geographic point of view. Doing so will allow the students to develop their critical thinking skills as well as their ability to form and express opinions. I've already tried this approach in my class and it works. It's really satisfying for a teacher when her students are disappointed to hear the recess bell.

"After nine years of teaching, I needed something new, and this project came up at the right time. We did this work for our students, for ourselves and for our colleagues, and I'm very proud of what we've accomplished."

Music In Unison

Chantal Parent
Teacher
Pensionnat des Saints-Anges, private school, Sainte-Foy

(CSG) While posing for a group picture, the members of the music program development committee started to sing a song by popular Québec singer Jean-Pierre Ferland. This showed the type of team spirit that had developed within this committee. According to Chantal Parent, this group's prime motivation was to work for the benefit of the students.

"A disadvantage of teaching in a private school is that you have a limited opportunity to communicate with other teachers. This is especially the case if you are a subject specialist. As a result, I appreciated being able to get out of the classroom to talk to people from all over Québec.

"The team worked really well together. People were extremely respectful of different points of view, and each person's opinion was given careful consideration. We figured that when someone got up to speak, there were probably about 50 other people who agreed with that person.

"There were some dark periods. We sometimes didn't understand what was happening and felt we were going backwards, yet we could speak up if we thought something was wrong. It was part of the process. Teachers and students will also have to go through this experience."

English Language Arts A New Chapter

Barbara Philips
Teacher
The Study, private school, Westmount

(CSG) For Barbara Philips, taking part in the reform process was like "renewing your vows!" She was enthusiastic about contributing to the development of the English language arts program.

"When I was asked to join this committee, I thought it would be a perfect opportunity be part of a major change. After ten years of teaching, it was like a new chapter in my career. It gave me the chance to try new things in the classroom and share ideas with my colleagues.

"What I appreciate about the new program is that I'm no longer standing there alone in front of the class. The 20 students in that classroom teach me as much as I teach them. We become partners and can do so much better if we work as a team! I also like the fact that we can experiment and that there's no one set way of doing things.

"People are worried about the upcoming changes. You have to realize that these changes won't occur in one fell swoop, but will take place gradually. The time frame will obviously be a major concern, but that's always been the case..."

Moral Education Overcoming Problems

(CSG) Nadine Martel was in her first year as a teacher when her school board

asked her to join the committee assigned to develop the moral education program. She jumped at the opportunity to work with people from all over Québec.

Nadine Martel
Teacher
Commission scolaire de la Capitale

"We started by defining the competencies that would make up the program, and we then acted more as consultants. A smaller committee would submit drafts of the program, and we would then make suggestions. Of course, we didn't always agree, but that's what makes the work interesting!

"We went through a difficult period when the revision committee said that our program had to be rewritten. Let's just say that it was pretty discouraging at first, but we got down to work and now the committee mentions us as an example to be followed!

"However, I disapprove of the fact that we aren't more involved in implementing the Reform. I would have been able to train the people in my school board, but I was, unfortunately, not asked to contribute in this regard.

"But I'm very satisfied with the work we did, and it was a rewarding experience. I met all sorts of people and was able to get an insider's view of the reform process!"

Français langue d'accueil (French Welcoming Classes) Welcoming New Immigrants

Eléonore Abboud
Teacher
Commission scolaire de Montréal

(CSG) If young immigrant students need special help with their French, they are still like all other children, with skills to be developed and energy to burn!

"I taught French welcoming classes for many years and even though I now work with regular classes, I'm fond of these students and still keep up with their progress.

"Our committee was made up of a wide variety of people: teachers, education consultants, representatives of services for cultural communities, etc. Everyone shared his or her experiences, which made for interesting discussions.

"We had to examine all the measures related to welcoming classes, such as classes consisting solely of newly arrived non-francophone students and special support within regular classes. We also considered what was being done in the French language of instruction program. Welcoming classes are not one-year preparatory classes. Students receive basic instruction and must acquire the same competencies as they would in a regular class.

"The good thing is that the same language is used throughout the curriculum. Teaching in all the subject areas is based on the principles outlined in the Program of Programs, which makes for a certain measure of continuity.

"We'll have to see how the new curriculum will be implemented in the classroom. Since project-based learning is already used in French welcoming classes, teachers probably won't be reluctant to use this approach. But above all, they will need proper training."

French as a Second Language The Benefits of Practical Experience

Micheline Gagné
Teacher
Commission scolaire Central Québec

(CSG) Micheline Gagné teaches at Ste-Foy Elementary School, which had already been experimenting with new approaches for four years when it became a pilot school last year. The members of the committee assigned to develop the French as a second language program were therefore able to benefit from Micheline Gagné's practical experience.

"Being involved in both developing and piloting the new program was a most enjoyable experience because it provided valuable feedback. For example, we devised projects based on the cross-curricular competencies and areas of lifelong learning that involved using French. This showed us that the two languages could be linked together. In the past, subject specialists did not work with the homeroom teacher, but I'm now involved in the class, and both the homeroom teacher and I use the same approach and the same tools. The results are very positive: even students who were experiencing problems are more motivated and doing better.

"Of course, I shared my experience, hoping it would enhance the program. The other committee members would ask me questions on what was happening in my school, which provided ideas that could be used to develop the program.

"Our school's experience has been very positive, and we intend to continue along these lines."

Dance A Source of Satisfaction Despite the Obstacles

(CSG) All the arts education programs were harmonized in order to make them consistent and easier to understand. In dance as in the other arts, this harmonization process involved certain obstacles, but it was also a great source of satisfaction.

Hélène Lachapelle
Teacher
Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys

"We worked to develop competencies that students should acquire in dance, as well as the subject content. It was quite a laborious process: we would receive drafts of the program, work on them and then go back over them at the next meeting... It was an arduous exercise that involved constantly revising concepts. Luckily, the team developed good chemistry, and this made the work easier.

"We also harmonized all the arts education programs (music, dance, drama and visual arts). All the programs can be viewed vertically and horizontally, which makes things easier. We tried to link all the programs together, even if each retained its own identity.

"We sometimes felt that we would never be able to pull it off, but we eventually succeeded! It was a positive experience, and I'm proud to have been involved in this project."

Paule Choquette
Teacher
Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin

"When I was asked to join the development committee, I was interested right away because I wanted to be in the heat of the action and to ensure that my teaching methods reflected the new principles outlined in the Reform."

"Our work was related to what we had read and experienced. We shared our specific knowledge of a subject. The ministry of education provided an operational framework, and we shared our subject-related knowledge and classroom experience.

I feel that I contributed to something, that we had a role to play, and that's important. But we often worked at top speed, and we didn't have time to go back over what we had done so we could develop an even greater sense of achievement.

"The results are very interesting, and the approach is very modern. Dance teachers had long felt that the idea of enhancing the cultural component of the curriculum was being neglected. This applies not only to the arts, but to cultural matters in general."

Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction Mutual Respect

Diane Meloche
Enseignante
Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys

(CSG) The program development committees were made up of various types of professionals who sometimes had differing points of view. But as Diane Meloche explained, when everyone is on good terms, you usually get results.

"I discussed the Catholic religious instruction program with my educational consultant and thought it needed to be updated. He then mentioned that this committee was being formed and asked me if I wanted to join. And so I did!"

"The committee consisted of teachers, educational consultants and officials from the ministry of education. I have to admit that at first, the other teachers and I were concerned that we would only be discussing language and theories, and not teaching methods. We wanted to talk about what was really going on in the classroom. But people began to connect, and everybody listened carefully to what was being said. We felt that our opinions were really considered important.

"It was a difficult process, but we were finally able to put our ideas down on paper. The program is simple and easy to understand. We're really impressed with our work!

"Now, we'll have to let people get used to the changes. We had time to become familiar with the vocabulary, so everyone else should get that chance."

Protestant Moral and Religious Education The Value of Diversity

Helaine Dandy
Educational Consultant
English Montreal School Board

(CSG) It was essential that people with different backgrounds sit on the various committees so that every aspect of life in Québec would be reflected in the new curriculum. This diversity was an invaluable asset to the committee assigned to develop the Protestant moral and religious education program.

"I very much appreciated being able to talk to people from various regions. Everyone lived in a different situation and faced a variety of problems. For example, intercultural education is an important component of the program, yet it isn't always easy to teach the major world religions in the outlying regions. They will have to find methods and resources that are more available in Montréal.

"It's hard to carry on a discussion when there are so many different points of view, but it's also a learning experience. In any case, these ideas and observations formed the basis of our work.

"When you consider that we started from scratch, with concepts we still hadn't fully assimilated, my first reaction is: 'Wow!' We've come a long way and produced something worthwhile. But we mustn't think that our work is done. The program is still evolving, and it should keep evolving because that is one of its strengths."

A Shared Passion

After 18 months of assimilation, challenging of current methods, intensive discussions and design, members of the elementary-level program development committees got together to share their thoughts on the process as well as the results of their work. The following pages contain personal accounts about an experience that made waves and generated much passion.

Pauline Langlais, head of the French language of instruction program and master of ceremony for this assessment event, invited the spokespersons for the different subject committees to come to the podium and present the comments made by team members at meetings during the day.

For some participants, working on program development committees challenged their practices; for others, it improved their methods; and for others still, it confirmed the way they had been working all along. Chantal Poirier, spokesperson for the program development committee for social sciences explained, "Our reflections and discussions had a direct impact on our classroom practices because, each time we returned to our schools, we tried out and implemented aspects of the new programs of studies." Committee members also noted that they are ahead of their colleagues: they will have had the opportunity to assimilate the Education Reform before starting to implement it. For many members, the experience was a wonderful source of motivation that propelled them to an even greater commitment to the teaching profession.

"It made us see teaching in a different light," affirmed Suzanne Giroux, spokesperson for the program development committee for moral and religious education. "We no longer see ourselves as specialists that dish out knowledge; now we are 'facilitators'." Some members say that, from now on, workbooks will become accessories, or mere ornaments! Committee members also had to rethink their evaluation practices, which will now be carried out on a daily basis.

Exchanging and comparing ideas led committee members to discover and better understand the realities of their own schools. Now they have succeeded in getting along and working in a calm and serene atmosphere, and hope that they will be able to take that serenity back to their own schools. Furthermore, they are all convinced that the Education Reform marks the end of working in isolation. From now on, teamwork should be promoted, and the entire staff—specialists and generalists alike—should communicate with one another and collaborate. Some people who participated in the project have already observed this coming together in their own schools. "We had noticed that, as specialists, we were not really part of the group," said Jack Meloche of the program development committee for English language arts. "However, we have experienced a certain coming together because teachers have shared their experiences with their colleagues, and that has created a group dynamic that we hadn't seen in schools before."

Committee members found certain subjects or concepts quite appealing. To begin with, everyone agreed that the new programs are student-centred. The student is therefore "the heart, the driving force and the architect of his or her own learning," said Daniel Bertrand, spokesperson for the program development committee for physical education and health. Redefining the role of the student and the teacher was also an important step of the process.

The introduction of the areas of lifelong learning and cross-curricular competencies, which form the fine threads linking all the subjects together, helped to establish a consistent relationship between the different programs of study. They will also help teachers to establish links with the students' everyday lives and create meaningful learning situations adapted to them. "Adding popular culture to the curriculum is exciting; it is important that, when students enter the classroom, they relate what they are learning to their own world and their own realities," said Eileen Kelley of the program development committee for English language arts. For most subject areas, emphasizing culture proved to be a great source of inspiration. "Making 'interpretation' one of the required competencies was quite stimulating for the entire team," Sylvie Legault, of the drama program development committee told the group. "It is an excellent way of exploring different cultures and promoting cultural awareness."

The integration of new teaching and learning concepts (cooperative teaching, project-based learning, the logic underlying the competencies, etc.) was a crucial step for many colleagues before they embarked upon the development of content and competencies, a major turning point in the Education Reform. With regards to evaluation, giving priority to learning processes—now given as much importance as results—also led to surprises. However, certain concerns still need to be addressed with regard to evaluation.

A look of satisfaction lit up the face of each participant when the time came to assess the results. "We have the best program," the participants all agreed and joked. They all felt they had created a product they believe in, one that truly reflects the group spirit. "We enjoyed putting our individual professional areas of expertise together, even though they were quite diversified," explained Yves Lavoilette, spokesperson for the program development committee for French as a second language. The common need to understand one another led to exciting outcomes. "As much as the process was complex and unsettling for committee members, the new program is simple, clear and easy to manage," affirmed France David of the music program development committee.

All along, two key themes guided the process: the constant concern to put students at the very heart of their own learning and the will to relate learning to reality in a concrete manner. Everyone agrees that the programs are consistent with these priorities. "The product that has been designed is quite flexible, which is a bonus," said Agostino Prochetta, spokesperson for the program development committee for science and technology. "This flexibility will allow teachers to adapt the program to their students' areas of interest," Lucie Fillion of the program development committee for Protestant moral and religious education added. "Acquiring competencies in a classroom context is more realistic and dynamic." From now on, students' learning will be action-oriented. Also, committee members are all proud that the desired relationships between the subject areas and the Program of Programs were successfully created.

The members of the various committees were quite anxious to return to their schools so that they could implement the fruit of their labour. "Everyone agrees that a beautiful dream will become reality in the weeks and months to come," said Richard Carrière of the Program of Programs development committee.

"Did you implement activities in your schools while the work was in progress?" This question, posed by the master of ceremony, Pauline Langlais, received a variety of answers. A handful of committee members had been ordered to keep their lips sealed because their schools were not yet ready to embark upon the Reform. Others chose to introduce the program slowly, but surely, as the spokesperson for the preschool program development committee, Marc St-Gelais, stated. "We are disseminating the information slowly, taking it one small step at a time." In other schools, committee members are already acting as resource persons for their colleagues.

One thing was obvious: all the committee members without exception would like and want to be recognized as "active guides and witnesses to the implementation of the Education Reform," said Thérèse Tremblay of the program development committee for French, language of instruction. "We want to pursue the reflection we have started and to share our experiences with others. We want to be 'bearers of the good news'."

"All the resources (information, time, materials and means) should be made available to teachers as well as to parents, so that they can integrate and implement the reform," explained Maurice Roy, spokesperson for the program development committee for Catholic moral and religious instruction. It was no surprise that all committee members expressed the wish that their colleagues at both the elementary and secondary levels endorse the Education Reform and, like them, reaffirm or rediscover their passion for the teaching profession!

Difficulties

Developing the programs of study for elementary levels was both an unsettling and enriching process for all those who participated in it. Each of them encountered obstacles and difficulties which, rather than decrease their momentum, inspired reflection.

The first obstacle was time. Committee members met at regular intervals over the past months. Most of them felt that the amount of time allotted did not match the magnitude of the work that had to be done, and that the meetings were scheduled too far apart. From the onset, they felt they did not have enough time to master the vocabulary and integrate the new rationale, concepts and methods they had to work with in developing the contents of the various subject areas. This was an even greater constraint for the members from Anglophone schools who received the English version of the materials only once the work was already in progress. In addition, having to incorporate changes that were made to the initial parameters during the course of the work further complicated the process. The quick speed with which the work was done left committee members feeling uncertain: they felt they hadn't had time "to step back to get an overall picture of the situation," explained Sylvie Legault, spokesperson for the drama program development committee.

Some members saw their task more as an evaluation and consultation exercise than as developing programs, since they were working with already well thought-out plans. Thérèse Couture of the fine arts program development committee summarized, "The fact that we had not been consulted about the rationale and did not have access to any of the sources from the onset put us in a rather uneasy position for adopting a socioconstructivist approach. We were thrown off balance, we experienced hesitations and difficulties; but in the end, the experience greatly enriched us, made us much more mature."

From the beginning, committee members had to be open to a new concept of teaching and learning. Some saw the process as a continuation of what they were already doing in their classrooms; others thought it was a departure from their normal practices. This was particularly the case for members of the mathematics program development committee. "We did a lot of work on the subject area, which usually focuses on content, so that we could make room for the processes," Pierrette Houde-Woytuik explained.

All the teams agreed that it was not easy to connect the programs of study to the Program of Programs or the theory to the actual teaching methods. Members had to be able, first of all, to move away from the old objective-based program in order to focus on the competency-based approach. This transition gave rise to some lively debates. Some members found that not having a prior model—such as the Program of Programs or the social sciences subject area—cast a shadow of uncertainty at the beginning, but that uncertainty quickly gave way to creativity.

Working in teams also created some constraints. Gathered around the same table, committee members from different schools, cultures and regions had to share their knowledge, experiences and vision, an exercise that sometimes led to clashes. "We had to work together regardless of the diversity of opinions," said Louise Poulain of the dance program development committee. "The experience was enriching, but it wasn't easy for us to let go of certain ideas. Coming to a consensus isn't so simple, especially when you want that consensus to reflect everyone's opinions."

Implementation Design Committee

NOEL BURKE

The following is an abridged version of the June 2000 annual report of Noel Burke, Chairperson of the Implementation Design Committee (IDC) for the English sector. For more information about IDC initiatives and activities, visit www.qesn.meq.gouv.qc.ca/reform/ or contact your school board Instructional or Educational Services department.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the first annual report on the initiatives of the Implementation Design Committee. The committee, a collaborative venture with the Services à la communauté anglophone of the Ministère de l'Éducation, is composed of the nine Directors of Instructional or Educational Services of the English-language boards and a representative of the Educational Services of the Littoral School Board, two private sector representatives, three teacher representatives, three school principal representatives as well as members of the Service à la communauté anglophone.

Our mandate is to provide guidance and support during the implementation of curriculum and school reform in the English sector, with the current focus on the implementation of new curriculum in Elementary Cycle One which is to begin in September of 2000. This mandate is being carried out in conjunction with the implementation process adopted by the Ministry and with respect to those of the individual regions.

Two conclusions became clear very early in our deliberations and remain as cornerstones to reform. First, there appears to be very strong support among partners at all levels within the system for the philosophy and objectives of the reform and the changes suggested. The challenges lie with the practical realization of these goals. Secondly, it became quickly apparent that as a committee, our role should be to support local school-based reform initiatives.

Following is the summary of our activities for the current year in addition to the initiatives we have planned for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted by Noel Burke for the Committee.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES – YEAR 1

The first full year of operation of the Implementation Design Committee was planned and carried out as a year of preparation for the implementation of curriculum which is to begin this fall. Therefore, the focus of our interventions has been on supporting schools and organizations in the development of a structural framework in response to the expectations of the Québec Education Program.

The following are the major initiatives the IDC has undertaken this year in support of school reform:

- In our preliminary report we identified what we considered to be the "Essential Conditions" for success. As we continue to view these conditions as the foundation of the school reform movement, we have chosen to re-publish them as an appendix to this report.
- We have completed the development of an Interactive Web Site as our primary vehicle for the sharing and networking of resources within the English-language community to support the reform process.
- Using the services of developers at the university level we have initiated a number of projects involving the collection and production of resource materials related to selected elements of the reform.
- We held a Facilitator Training Seminar in the fall to set the stage for the creation of 'expert groups' with a view to mapping out and delivering professional development activities for teachers and administrators.
- We hosted a Leadership Symposium in February which provided a unique opportunity for all elementary school principals in the province to come together as community leaders to find common understanding and direction for school reform within the English community. The event also received considerable and positive media coverage, which gave the public a good first impression of the changes to come.
- We supported, in collaboration with the Services à la communauté anglophone, initiatives within Lead Schools that experimented with selected components of the reform.
- We have had considerable success in our on-going elaboration of resources to support local implementation plans. This is being achieved through active networking with the Curriculum Coalition and other groups that represent the stakeholders of the English-language education community.
- Finally, we sponsored a highly successful event for Lead and Pilot Schools entitled "Sharing Stories", which was organized by the members of the Services à la communauté anglophone team.
- We have not yet succeeded in developing a 'Profile' of the English sector teachers by subject, cycle and language of instruction. This initiative will be re-examined during the upcoming year.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS – YEAR 1 IN A NUTSHELL

As we complete our year of preparation for school reform we are confident that our greatest achievement has been to focus our administrative agenda on learning, pedagogy and the adaptation of structures to accommodate the expectations of school reform. A clear understanding of the expectations of reform has evolved, although the level of preparedness of the partners varies from school to school, depending on the existing culture of schools and the level of comfort with innovation that has developed. As our students begin to establish their learning profiles, we, too, are setting out on new life-long learning trails.

We now embark on a voyage of discovery in the implementation of the new programs of study at the Cycle One level. Many of our efforts in the second half of this year have focused on sharing the news of "best practices" models and experimentation taking place in schools across the province. The closing event of this first year provided a forum for teachers from the Lead Schools and Pilot Schools to share their experiences in a relaxed setting with an empowering atmosphere. It is the clear conviction of those in attendance that this participatory approach to in-service activities must become a model for future initiatives in professional development and school improvement.

We are conscious of the need to address the concerns of teachers and other stakeholders throughout the system as the reform works its way into the fabric of our school communities. For this reason the focus of our efforts next year (the first year of program implementation) will be on the provision of support to teachers in the classroom. To this extent we have planned a number of activities and events to foster three goals: Building Coherence, Supporting Educational Leadership and Providing Opportunities for Networking. These are the initiatives the IDC will undertake for the year 2000-2001.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: ACTIVITIES

1. Co-host with the QPAT Conference Committee, a one-day pre-conference symposium on reform for elementary teachers.
2. Organize and co-host with teacher/subject support groups, a leadership seminar in February 2001 as a follow-up to this year.
3. Develop an interactive version of the Curriculum on the IDC website which can be downloaded and customized at local levels.
4. Publish a Calendar of Events related to reform that will serve to inform all stakeholders of reform initiatives around the province.
5. Initiate and develop partnerships with teacher/subject support groups such as MAPCO, SAPCO and the History & Geography Task Force.
6. Continue the development of a central bank of resource people to serve professional development needs throughout the system.
7. Coordinate the sharing of best practices through the support of such endeavors as Lead & Pilot School projects, virtual visits and learning packages.
8. Research a repertoire of time management models that support initiatives to provide teachers with planning and team-building time.
9. Research and develop scenarios that support innovation in practices related to student assessment, evaluation and reporting to parents.
10. Develop a program evaluation framework that will assist schools in assessing their progress in reform and school improvement.

CONCLUSION

The 1999-2000 year has been a stellar one for school reform in the English schools of Québec. This is due in large part to the leadership shown by the Services à la communauté anglophone of the Ministère de l'Éducation. Through the creation of the IDC, they have acted in keeping with the basic principles of the reform by nurturing change from within the school community rather than imposing it from above. The support and resources that the SCA team have provided reflect their dedication and collaboration.

During this year of preparation we have seen wide acceptance of the tenets of the learner-centered classroom, the teacher-centered curriculum and the community-centered school. As witness to this, teaching teams have experimented extensively in the areas of classroom management, evaluation, teaching strategies and team building. The fruits of these labours are blossoming in the nine Lead Schools and three Pilot Schools of the English sector.

The spirit of innovation is not restricted to these settings, however, as the exploration of better ways to teach and learn has always been a component of professional practice. It has been said that school reform is a 'systemic response to good teaching practice' and this has been borne out by a demonstrated willingness to adapt long-standing structures to accommodate a refreshed view of life in the classroom. The new emphasis on autonomous learning for students has also encouraged a new freedom and potential for growth opportunities for their teachers.

It is critical, therefore, that educational leadership, both formal and informal, respond by collaboratively developing the resources, support and flexibility that teachers require to help their students succeed. We are confident that our continuing efforts will contribute to the maintenance of the current atmosphere of renewed excitement about teaching and learning in the province of Québec.

APPENDIX – ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL REFORM

1 This is a "school-based", "learner-centered" reform, whose goal is to establish natural learning patterns within the classroom, which will require significant adaptation of existing structures.

2 This is an educational reform that will impact on the entire system vertically in terms of power and hierarchy, and horizontally in terms of the interrelationships of partners and structures.

3 This is a reform of ownership, drawing together and empowering learners, teachers, parents and the educational community at large through a comprehensive school implementation plan.

4 Schools must adapt their culture and organization to become learning organizations which are open to reflection, change, growth, innovation and experimentation.

5 The implementation of the reform is predicated on the practice of collaborative participatory management, which permeates and extends from the classroom to the council of commissioners.

6 Team-building within schools and the prioritization of a pedagogical context and purpose for staff meetings and interaction will be essential catalysts for change.

7 Expert groups will have to be established and made available to serve as resources for the various needs and approaches of the educational partners entrusted with reform.

8 The availability of non-teaching time will be critical in providing opportunities for teachers and their partners to engage in collective strategies to realize the expectations of the reform.

9 There is no "recipe" for a successful reform – rather a menu of resources in the form of knowledges, skills and attitudes from which stakeholders will select the materials to build a plan aligning the culture and needs of their organization(s) with the reform.

10 The process of change, how people come to cope with and adjust to the expectation of the reform, is just as important as the objective of change.

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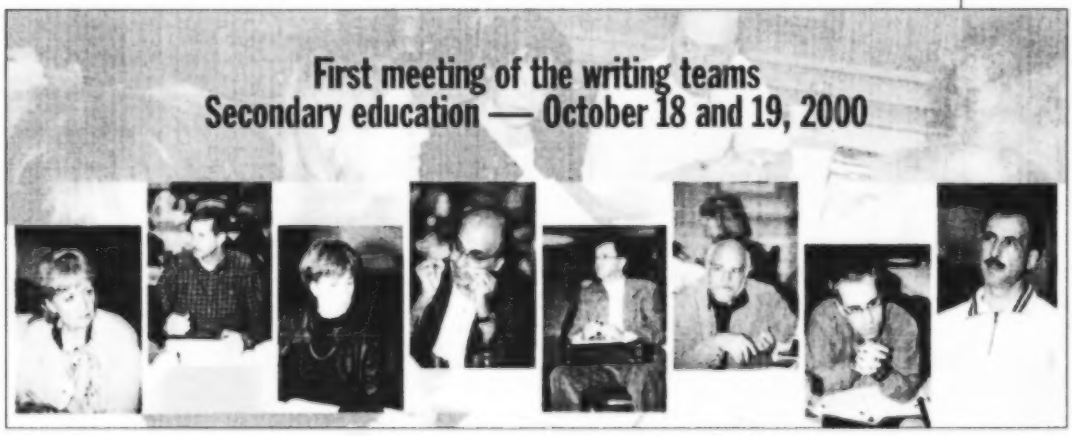

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